DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 208 658 FL 012 572

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TITLE The University of Wisconsin Summer Study in Poland (1979-1980).
PUB DATE 14 Nov 80
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Conference on American Academic Programs Abroad (Omaha, NE, November 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Second Language Programs; Cultural Activities; *Cultural Education; Higher Education; Student Exchange Programs; *Study Abroad
IDENTIFIERS *Poland; University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

ABSTRACT

The Polish government has encouraged summer study tours of Poland by students from abroad. The unique and fascinating Polish culture combines with the economy of travel in Poland to make such a tour attractive to American students young and old. Four universities offer general summer courses. The program in Krakow is characterized by a minimum of ideological persuasion, consisting of a few lectures which can be omitted at the request of the study group. Although the university is very cooperative, quality of instruction has been uneven. Language instruction presents problems. The program includes visits to a number of historic and cultural sites. Films and concerts are also attended, and opportunities are available for individual activities. Living conditions are modest but decent. The problem of student boredom may be addressed by adequate orientation in the home country. This will include explanations of the socialist system, living conditions, traveling, shopping, and paperwork. A certain amount of academic rigor should be attached to the program to insure commitment on the part of the students. (JB)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SUMMER STUDY IN POLAND (1979-1980)

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To attract foreigners to Poland, the Polish government, through the Polonia Society, has embarked on an ambitious program of organizing academic and cultural courses and study tours, offered each summer in various locations. As a result, Poland has become one of the most attractive countries for American students and teachers.

Poland is attractive because it offers to visitors a rich cultural heritage of architecture, painting, sculpture, and music in various parts of a relatively small country. Whether an American student is located in Lublin or Poznań, Toruń or Kraków, he is able to see and enjoy large art collections of historical significance in this central European country. He can travel freely in Poland and see a variety of places in 4 to 6 weeks.

The attitude of Poles towards Americans is very friendly and open. This is manifested in routine activities in the dormitories and universities as well as in casual encounters during group or individual travels.

Poland is very inexpensive for Americans. Land arrangements are very reasonable for American participants; in 1980,

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the cost of a 4 to 6 week stay in Poland, including room and board, tuition and travel, was from $270 to $350. Additionally, the dollar in Poland can go a long way, if a student wants to buy souvenirs or travel individually. As a member of a summer program, the student does not have to exchange $7 or $15 a day, ordinarily required of American tourists. With 3 credits from the University of Wisconsin, travel by air and other fees, the total cost of the program has been from $1180 to $1300.

Poland, unlike many European countries, preserves a particular charm which is new to American students. It is partly old architecture, partly local customs, partly old fashioned methods of agriculture, such as horses and ploughs, haywagons and haystacks, that catch the attention of young Americans and remind the older ones of their youth.

Poland is a vibrant and attractive country for visitors. The current cultural and political life offer direct learning experiences for American students, who can visit the churches and see for themselves the power of religion in Poland, stand in line and suffer the results of central planning, attend ethnic functions and observe the strength of local customs, and, above all, talk freely to the Poles and find out for themselves about their lives, work, and views. Sometimes they can see historical events such as, for example, the strikes in the summer of 1980.

Summer activities in Poland can be divided into 3 categories:

1. Meetings and festivals, e.g. Festival of Polish Folk Ensembles, Congress of Scholars of Polish Descent.
2. Summer schools of Polish language and culture.
3. Individual courses, e.g. for teachers of Polish, Polish cuisine, artists' and film makers' studios, folk dance instructors.

I will be talking about summer schools of Polish language and culture as they are most popular and suitable for beginning students.

There are 4 universities offering general summer courses: the Catholic University of Lublin, the Jagiellonian University of Kraków, the Copernicus University of Toruń, and the Mickiewicz University of Poznań. Additionally, the University in Wrocław offers a course on Polish theatre and film.

I will be talking mainly about Kraków since I am most familiar with their program. It should be mentioned also that one can arrange for a specific course in Poland if there is a group of 15-20 American students interested in a particular topic and if the Polish organizers can provide the local faculty to offer such a course.

In the academic program, the organizers like to include some lectures on the system of education in Poland and, additionally, for other reasons, the lectures on Polish economy, foreign

policy, social structure of contemporary Poland, church in Poland. We asked the organizers to eliminate these lectures from our second program and they complied with our request. These were the only attempts to influence our students but in a moderate way. Because the conditims of life in Poland become quickly obvious even to a 18 year old visitor and because Poland is relatively liberal in its attitude towards foreigners, we did not have to prepare our students during orientation sessions for ideological debates. Eliminating these topics seems to be the best way of avoiding political matters during one's stay in Poland. Polish organizers are flexible in complying with American requests.

The quality of instruction, both in content and language, depends on the faculty. In Kraków, it has been uneven. The English of the lecturers is in general good, their knowledge of the topics good, their delivery fair. The language instruction presents more difficult problems, mainly because of the brevity of the courses, uneven level of participants, lack of good language texts and tests, and lack of overall linguistic criteria of setting up a fragment of an instructional program.

The academic program of lectures and language instruction is enhanced by numerous trips. The course in Kraków, had the following scheduled guided activities:

A visit to the Museum of the Jagiellonian University, with Copernicus' books and astronomical instruments as the most interesting items.

The tour of the old city of Kraków with an art historian who showed the most interesting churches, houses, and architectural styles.

A visit to the Royal Castle of Wawel and the Cathedral with the tombs of St. Stanislaus, kings, queen Jadwiga, Mickiewicz and Słowacki, Kościuszko.

A visit to the museum at the castle of Pieskowa Skała.

A tour of the concentration camps in Oświęcim and Brzezinka.

A tour of Wieliczka salt mine -- medieval mines with the underground museum of mining.

A visit to the ethnographic museum of Kraków.

A trip to Częstochowa monastery, the site of the Black Madonna and place of pilgrimages.

A visit to the medieval castle, now in ruins, at Ogrodzieniec.

A raft float on the river Dunajec, between the mountains of the Pieniny.

A tour of the outdoor museum in Zubrzyca Górna and of Chochołów village, famous for the highland style of architecture.

A 2 day stay in Zakopane in the Tatry mountains, the most attractive and popular mountain resort in Poland.

A walk to Morskie Oko Lake in the Tatry mountains.

A short stop in Sandomierz and Kazimierz - medieval towns on the Vistula River.

3 days in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, with the tour of the city, Old City, and palaces of Łazienki and Wilanów.

Additionally, the organizers showed some Polish films, e.g. by Wajda and Zanussi, and invited the group to several concerts and a farewell dinner (all free of charge). Unofficially, we were able to visit the Pope's birthplace in Wadowice. We went on our own to the opera, to the operetta, to the museums. Some students ventured outside to visit relatives or explore their "roots". They found it a very enriching experience.

The living conditions in Poland are modest but decent. In Kraków, the students live in the dormitory, 2 to a room, although it is possible, for an additional fee of $30, to have a single room. The food is usually very good. Each group has a bus to travel in Poland. Two student guides-interpreters accompany the group. There are some sport facilities: tennis courts, swimming pools, volleyball courts, soccer fields.

With all these activities, one has to remember, however, that this is a month's stay in Poland and some students, after the scheduled activities are over and immediate surroundings explored, may find themselves bored in strange surroundings. The orientation sessions in the States have to emphasize that less active students may have to rely on their internal resour-

ces, on reading, on writing letters, on keeping logs, and that for some, this effort may be too demanding. These students begin to complain, some to enjoy Polish liquor -- in either case creating a problem for American leaders.

It is therefore very important to organize in the States adequate orientation sessions. We usually have two whole day sessions which we devote to the following topics:

1. General

We talk about the nature of the state and its system of government. We present to the students essential information on the history and geography of Poland and about Kraków. We show slides from our previous tour. We also mention that because of the large steel plant in Nowa Huta and the geographical location of Kraków in the valley, near the river, the air is highly polluted on windless days.

2. Academic

As I mentioned, the program in Poland comprises 30 hours of lectures and 45 hours of language. But the lectures in Poland are introductory and general and, additionally, 6 hours of lectures on Polish history or literature is hardly enough for a university student. The same is true about language. We try to appeal, therefore, to students who have some background in any aspect of Polish studies, be it by formal training or family background or previous travel. What is more, we look for the students who are interested in continuing their Polish studies

after their return from Poland. We want to integrate the summer study with their Polish interests and studies.

We require therefore that besides their attendance at lectures and participation in language classes, for which they receive a Polish summer school diploma, they write a research paper on one aspect of their studies in Poland. The paper is required if the student wants to get credit from our university.

This is a difficult assignment for many students but rewarding for those who are interested in Polish studies. Some of the topics selected last year were: the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Polish folk costumes of Kraków region, Health care system. There are many opportunities to collect materials for these papers in Poland, both officially or unofficially, and to research after coming back. The students can, for example, interview people in Poland, visit hospitals and kindergartens, and then have one month to write up the paper. We grant 3 credits for completion of the course.

3. Living conditions

It is necessary to explain about living conditions in Poland: about the dorm, rooms, toilets, time table, meals, dressing, and Polish rules of etiquette. For example, it is good to tell students that -no- is not good enough at the table and one will have to repeat it many times before Polish hosts will stop offering food to visitors.

4. Travelling

Travelling to and in Poland should be discussed in detail. Many students like to take a weekend off and sometimes they are not aware of the distances and difficulties of travelling alone. A good map helps at orientation session.

5. Shopping

It is a very popular topic. All types of stores are discussed, currency regulation explained, warnings about exchange of money on the black market issued. It is helpful to demonstrate some of the purchases and, at the same time, talk about customs regulations. Visa regulations are also discussed at this time since some people wish to travel individually and join the group in Poland, others need double entrance visas.

6. Paperwork

Finally, the orientation sessions are organized to do all paperwork, registration, payments, medical certificates, lists, etc.

After our return, we ask all participants for their evaluation forms. We read their papers and meet once more for a show of slides and social gathering. The course is over.

Not the exchange program, though. Our program is organized in such a way that the money our students pay for land arrangement in Poland (circa $350 per student) stays in escrow at the University of Wisconsin. The Jagiellonian University selects 2 or 3 scholars who come here for a semester or two

and carry on research. In this way we contribute to academic exchange and can see the results of our work: satisfied American students and Polish scholars given an opportunity to come to the States, research, and go back to share their knowledge with their colleagues and students in Poland.